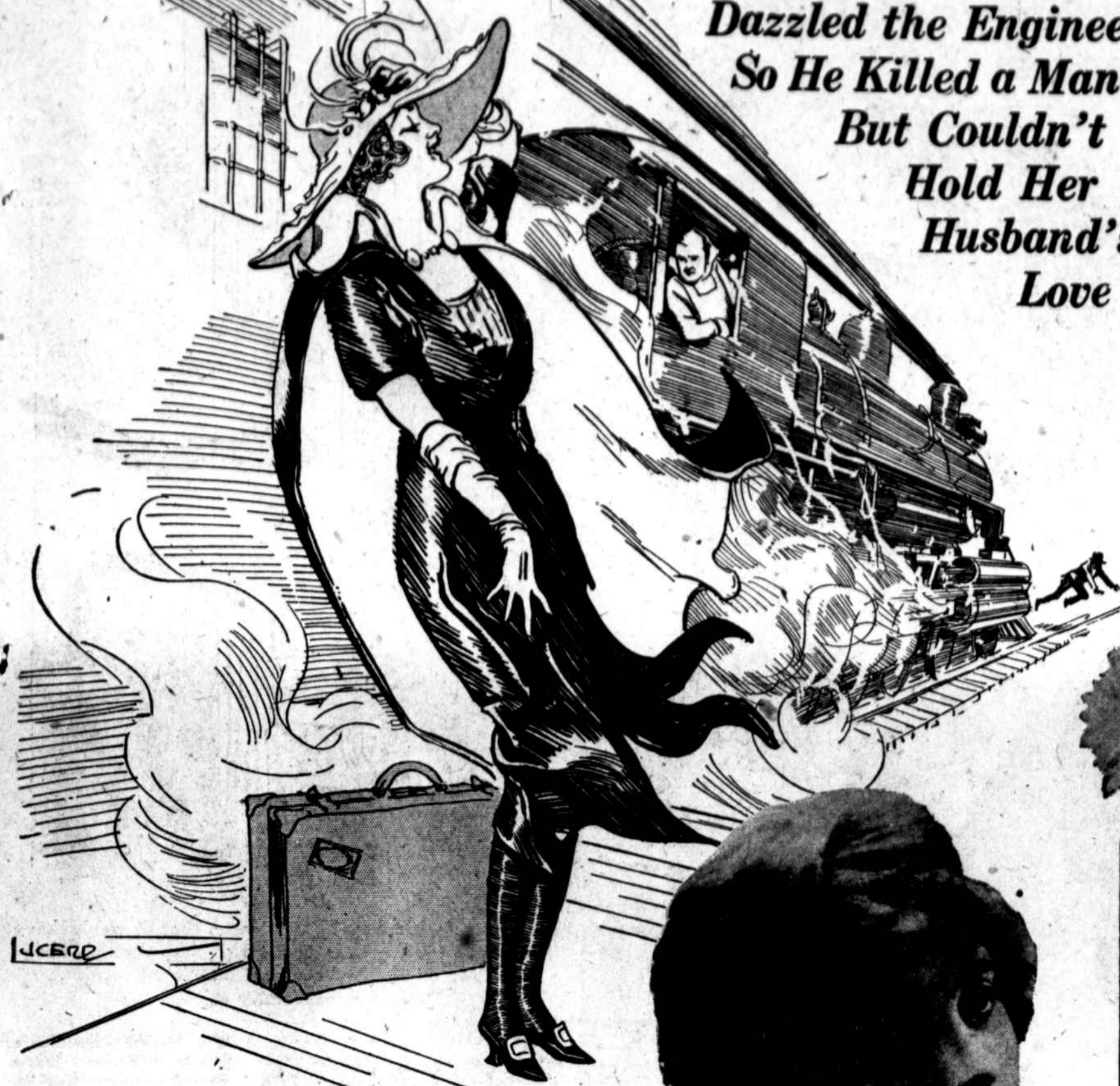


# Her Fatal Beauty

Won the Beauty Prize,  
Dazzled the Engineer  
So He Killed a Man---  
But Couldn't  
Hold Her  
Husband's  
Love



"There stood pretty Corene. The engineer looked and kept on looking, witnesses testified. And so the unfortunate and unobserved Mr. Keeler was struck and killed."

GREAT beauty was held by the ancients to be a fatal gift, even though they worshipped it. Not only upon its owner, but upon those who sought the owner for their own, the curse of unhappiness, misery, death fell. Great beauty brought great joy, but it also brought great sorrow, causing, indeed, wars, murder and sudden death manifold. There was the famous Helen of Troy—"the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium."

Some face! This would be the current description, no doubt. But in all the history of fatal beauty, its odd and interesting effects upon man, there has been no record until recently of its having lured an engineer's eyes from his locomotive dials and the road ahead, thereby causing the said locomotive to hit a man and kill him.

Yet because his eyes fell suddenly upon Mrs. William P. Whittaker as she stood waiting at a station for another train, an engineer of the New York Central Railroad did turn his gaze away from the tracks and so, falling to see one Charles L. Keeler, ran his engine over him! At least that is what Mr. Keeler's widow testified, saying that it was her belief that if both engineer and fireman had not been so enthralled by this glimpse of Mrs. Whittaker she would not then be wearing weeds nor would her three children be fatherless! The judge agreed with her and the jury which awarded her \$6,500. Mrs. Whittaker's is indeed a fatal beauty.

She herself says life has been just one embarrassment after another because of it and, as she puts it, "My marriage was the worst thing that my beauty ever brought me!"

Mrs. Whittaker, among other things, won the beauty prize at a famous contest, dazzled an engineer so that he killed a man—but she couldn't keep her husband's love with it! She is now suing for divorce. But of all that more later.

The trial of the unique case was lively. It was proven that Mrs. Whittaker came from her home at Millerton, N. Y., on a certain day and at a certain hour and made her way to the station. She was dressed charmingly and being ahead of time waited on the platform for her train.

There was the rumble of an approaching locomotive. Mrs. Whittaker involuntarily raised her large and melting black eyes. It was a freight. She lowered them.

The freight went by. Suddenly there was commotion and terror. People were running to the crossing a little way off. The freight had come to a stop.

A man had been run over by it. Not then did she know that the unfortunate's life had hung upon that upward sweep of her eyes and that it was the impact of them and of her own lovely image upon the crew of the engine that had doomed him!

Witnesses testified, thereafter, that when the locomotive went by both engineer and fireman were on the same side of the cab, staring with all their might at Mrs. Whittaker. Her beauty had, literally, turned their heads. If their heads had not been turned to her, they would have seen Mr. Keeler and could have stopped in time to have avoided running him down.

Of course the contention of the railroad was that the victim was the prey of his own negligence; that the engineer was attending strictly to business and that the accident was an unavoidable one.

Whereupon, to the immediate interest of every one, the plaintiff's attorneys called Mrs. Whittaker to the stand as an exhibit. Mrs. Whittaker, blushing, walked up.

"Ah-h-h!" rustled the court room. The jurors gazed as one upon her.

They looked upon a deliciously rounded figure, a face almost Grecian in the regularity of its features, a very lovely mouth, masses of raven hair—and they looked into the same big, black eyes that had attracted like magnets the attention of the New York Central's engineer—if the plaintiff was to be believed.

Thereafter the jury's gaze hung rapturously upon her.

Her looks were better evidence of the contention of the suing side than her testimony.

She hung her lovely but blameless head. "I was waiting on the platform for the next train," she murmured. "I did not see either engineer or fireman. I was just looking down the track for my train. I heard a freight come along. I saw a man crossing the track and saw the train run over and crush him. That is all I know. Really it is."

The lawyers who argued the case wrangled about every point in it except the beauty of Mrs. Whittaker. As to that they vied with each other in compliments. "She's the prettiest girl I have ever seen," said the counsel for the widow. "But you can't hold that against her in deciding the case. She lives near the railroad and she has to go out once in a while. Because she has the beauty of an Oriental houri is no reason that she cannot step outside her home, although I admit she wouldn't have to be very near to make her presence felt."

"I approve of everything my opponent has said about this lady's good looks," said the New York Central Railroad's attorney, gallantly. "But, gentlemen of the jury, does it seem probable that the engineer and fireman of this train would wilfully neglect their duty to enjoy even such a beauty feast?"

That was a somewhat unfortunate remark. Once—it is a classic story of the bar—there was a young attorney who had for a client a particularly hard-faced person charged with a minor offense. The client was, in fact, harder looking than hard faced. His attorney hadn't much of a de-



Another Charming Portrait of Too Beautiful Corene.

fense but he was young and hopeful and his gratitude to his client for being a client made him view that client through rosy glasses. Indeed, the "mug" must have seemed almost beautiful to him. "Your Honor," he said to the judge, "I have nothing to say except this—look at my client your Honor! Look at him well!" The judge looked long and earnestly.

"Is that all you ask me?" he inquired at last, mildly.

"That is all, sir," answered the young lawyer, blissfully confident that his Honor saw as he did.

"Very well," said the judge. "I had determined to give him thirty days, but having looked—having looked—"

"Yes?" whispered the young lawyer. "Having looked at him well," continued the jurist, "three months!"

Somewhat the same thing happened here.

"Sure they would!" said someone in the courtroom, quite audibly. "Who wouldn't?"

The judge pounded his gavel. "If there is another demonstration in court I order you to clear the courtroom," he said sternly to the court officer.

Mr. Charles Morchauser, the widow's counsel, continued the tribute to Mrs. Whittaker:

"There is no evidence of flirtation on the beautiful young woman's part," he chivalrously conceded. "She did nothing that anyone could criticize except that

she was handsome, and that was not her fault. Our witnesses tell you that the engineer and fireman were on the same side of the engine and that their heads were both turned toward the beautiful young lady. The engineer and fireman, instead of paying attention to their business, were paying attention to a superlatively handsome young woman."

The jury deliberated for seven hours. It then decided that the railroad men had been lured from their duty by this unconscious siren of the railroad tracks. They had gazed at her as the mariners listened to songs of the Lorelei. And as the mariners had drifted onto the rocks they had let their train run over Mr. Keeler.

It was very painful and embarrassing for beautiful Mrs. Whittaker. But then, she says, as has been written, life has been one embarrassment after another for her because of her good looks. In the town of Millerton, where she innocently caused a man his death, there had been competition for a Fluffy Ruffles prize. She and her sister and the young man who afterward married her were strolling through town when a crowd that had gathered about a drug store surged about her. In mob spirit they pressed so close to her that they crushed her gown and tore a part of it from her.

Sobbing and half-fainting, she was led away. Persons who gathered about followed her to the car.

"So she ain't Fluffy Ruffles after all,"



Mr. Whittaker, the Husband Whom Her Beauty Failed to Hold.



The Portrait of Corene Whittaker Which Won Her the Beauty Honors in a Prize Contest.

they said disappointedly. "But she is the prettiest girl in Dutchess County."

Then there was that photographers' competition. Mrs. Whittaker called for her brother at an uptown photographer's studio. The photographer was presented to her, but stared and forgot to bow.

"Do pose for me," he begged—"just as you are, in that pretty Summer gown. I want a picture of one of your type."

Obligingly Miss France consented. She had forgotten about the picture when one day she saw it confronting her from a newspaper's front page.

It had won a prize for the photographer as the most beautiful picture in a photographic exhibit at Terrace Garden. The photographer received the first honors and a hundred dollars. Miss France had the annoyance of being stared at in street cars and subway stations as the original of the picture.

But the crowning annoyance came when a person telephoned to her, saying: "Tardon the intrusion. I am"—he mentioned the name of a millionaire and captain of industry—"I have travelled all over Europe and have been in the chief cities of the world. I want to bestow upon you the apple that was awarded Venus. You are the most beautiful woman in the world."

Beautiful Miss France, who is modest, too, hastily hung up the receiver.

There was the inconvenience, too, which she experienced in the lobbies of theatres when men and women would say: "Oh, how do you do, Miss Elliott?" Or, "I did not know you were in this country."

Of course, Miss France who was, Mrs. Whittaker who is, admires Maxine Elliott and her titled sister, Lady Johnstone Forbes Robertson. Who does not? And she knew that the midnight coloring of her eyes and hair, the regularity of her features and her fine height suggested the beautiful brunettes sisters. But Mrs. Whittaker is an individualist. "I want to be myself, such as I am," she says.

But the greatest penalty wrought by her beauty, she believes, was her marriage. It was brought about by the unfortunate railroad accident. She told the story in detail to Judge Tierney, of the Supreme Court, when she asked for her divorce.

When Mrs. Keeler brought suit against the New York Central Railroad Company for damages for the loss of her husband a young man, the brother of one of the attorneys, stood outside the courthouse when the case was adjourned.

Miss France, perturbed by her first appearance on the witness stand, and brimming with sympathy for the widow, walked shyly past with her mother and sister.

"Hello!" said the young man. "Who is that gorgeous girl?"

"That is Miss France, whom the engineer was staring at when the train ran over a man and killed him," answered one of the group.

"For heaven's sake introduce me!" begged the young man.

One of the group of lawyers performed the ceremony of introduction. The young man drove up to the France farm at Cobleskill next Sunday. Thereafter he drove up, every Sunday and midweek, and after awhile still oftener.

The suit against the railroad company occurred in April. In October of the same year beautiful Miss France went to Hoboken and became the bride of young William Whittaker, of the Whittaker Speedometer Company.

"My marriage was the worst thing that my beauty has ever brought me," she said

to a representative of this newspaper.

"From the first year of our married life I was unhappy. My husband was a New York man with New York tastes. I had never been in New York until I was married. He wanted me to put on my best gowns and go with him to a play every evening and after the play to a cabaret. Now, frankly, I don't like the theatres. And I detest cabarets. He wanted me to be seen at both. He used to say, 'You are better looking than any of the women on the stage or in any cabaret. I want people to see you.' But I wanted to be at home getting my beauty sleep. I knew if I kept up this life I would soon be a red-eyed wreck. We quarreled about that."

"When my little son, Drexel Hathaway Whittaker, came matters were no better. We differed and differed and differed. One day my husband deserted me, leaving our little boy with me."

"I found evidence involving, very unhappily, a sixteen-year-old girl. The girl provided evidence by which I secured my divorce. We are good friends. I offered her a home and offered to adopt her child. She named it after me. But it has died."

"My husband really made no pretense of defending the suit. If I ever marry again I shall marry a man much older than I am."

"I would only be happy with a man who, like myself, loves home and quiet life."

"And I would not want one who loved me for my beauty alone. Such love soon passes. It is a house built on shifting sands!"

Mrs. Whittaker points to the fact that the loss of her husband's love is not unique in the history of beauties.

"Tell me a beauty that has kept her husband's love," she challenged.

The list was recited at length. Lillian Russell had worn four wedding rings before marriage became for her a permanent institution. Maxine Elliott failed to retain the conjugal affection of the late Nathaniel C. Goodwin.

Pauline Frederick has won and lost two husbands. Exquisite Marjorie Rambeau has been a plaintiff in a divorce court. Alice Joyce besought the courts to free her from an unloving spouse. The late Pauline Hall, beauteous Erminie of the opera of that name that was heard eight hundred times in New York, lost her husband to another.

Charlotte Walker debated the pros and cons of divorce, but decided to stand by her husband. Jobyna Howland, original Gibson girl, sought and secured a divorce from her famous novelist husband, Mae Murray, the Brinkley girl, was shorn of her first husband. Sadie Martinot, who had been the toast of the town, figured as a deserted wife.

Lillah McCarthy, who was called "London's loveliest woman," mislaid her distinguished husband, Granville Barker, and the former Mrs. Archer P. Huntington found an "wed him."

The statuesque beauties of opera have not been immune from conjugal heart-break. Emma Eames asked the courts for freedom. Lillian Nordica twice invoked their aid.

The beauties of England have been heroines of the divorce court. Lady Rosaline Chetwynd, Violet Vanbrugh, Gertrude Millar.

After a long recital of marital miseries of celebrated beauties Mrs. Whittaker summed up:

"Beauty is at most husband bait. It may lure and catch a man, but it cannot hold him on the hook."